The Little Clay Hut

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Drawings
by Evgeny Rachev

The Little Clay Hut

Russian Folk Tales About Animals

ТЕРЕМ-ТЕРЕМОК

Русские народные сказки

На английском языке

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Collected in this book are Russian folk tales about animals. They are quaint and intriguing, and though meant for the tiny tots, will endear themselves to all. The birds and animals in them speak like human beings and they think and act like human beings. Some of them are good and others bad, some are brave and others cowardly, some are foolish and others clever.

The splendid drawings of Yevgeny Rachev whose brush takes us into a world of magic are a joy in themselves.

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The Turnip

One day Old Man planted a turnip. The turnip grew and grew till it was very, very big.

Old Man went to pluck it. He pulled and he pulled but he could not pull it out.

So he called Old Woman.

Old Woman took hold of Old Man, and Old Man took hold of the turnip, and they pulled and they pulled but they could not pull it out.

So Old Woman called Little Girl.

Little Girl took hold of Old Woman, Old Woman took hold of Old Man, Old Man took hold of the turnip, and they pulled and they pulled but they could not pull it out.

So Little Girl called Dog.

Dog took hold of Little Girl, Little Girl took hold of Old Woman, Old Woman took hold of Old Man, Old Man took hold of the turnip, and they pulled and they pulled but they could not pull it out.

So Dog called Cat.

Cat took hold of Dog, Dog took hold of Little Girl, Little Girl took hold of Old Woman, Old Woman took hold of Old Man, Old Man took hold of the turnip, and they pulled and they pulled but they could not pull it out.

So Cat called Mouse.

Mouse took hold of Cat, Cat took hold of Dog, Dog took hold of Little Girl, Little Girl took hold of Old Woman, Old Woman took hold of Old Man, Old Man took hold of the turnip, and they pulled and they pulled till at last ... OUT IT CAME!

The Little Clay Hut

One day, a peasant, driving along with a load of clay pots, lost one of them on the way.

By and by a fly came flying up and she saw the pot.

"Oh!" said she. *"A little clay hut with the windows shut.* I wonder who lives there. Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?"

She looked into the pot, and seeing that it was empty, flew in and made her home there.

By and by a gnat came flying up and saw the pot.

"Oh!" said he. *"A little clay hut with the windows shut.* I wonder who lives there. Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?"

"I am. Buzz-Fuzz the Fly. And who are you?"

"Drone-Moan the Gnat."

"Well, why don't you move in with me?"

So in the Gnat flew, and the two of them made their home in the pot.

By and by a mouse came running up and saw the pot.

"Oh!" said she. *"A little clay hut with the windows shut.* I wonder who lives there. Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?"

"We are. Buzz-Fuzz the Fly and Drone-Moan the Gnat. And who are you?"

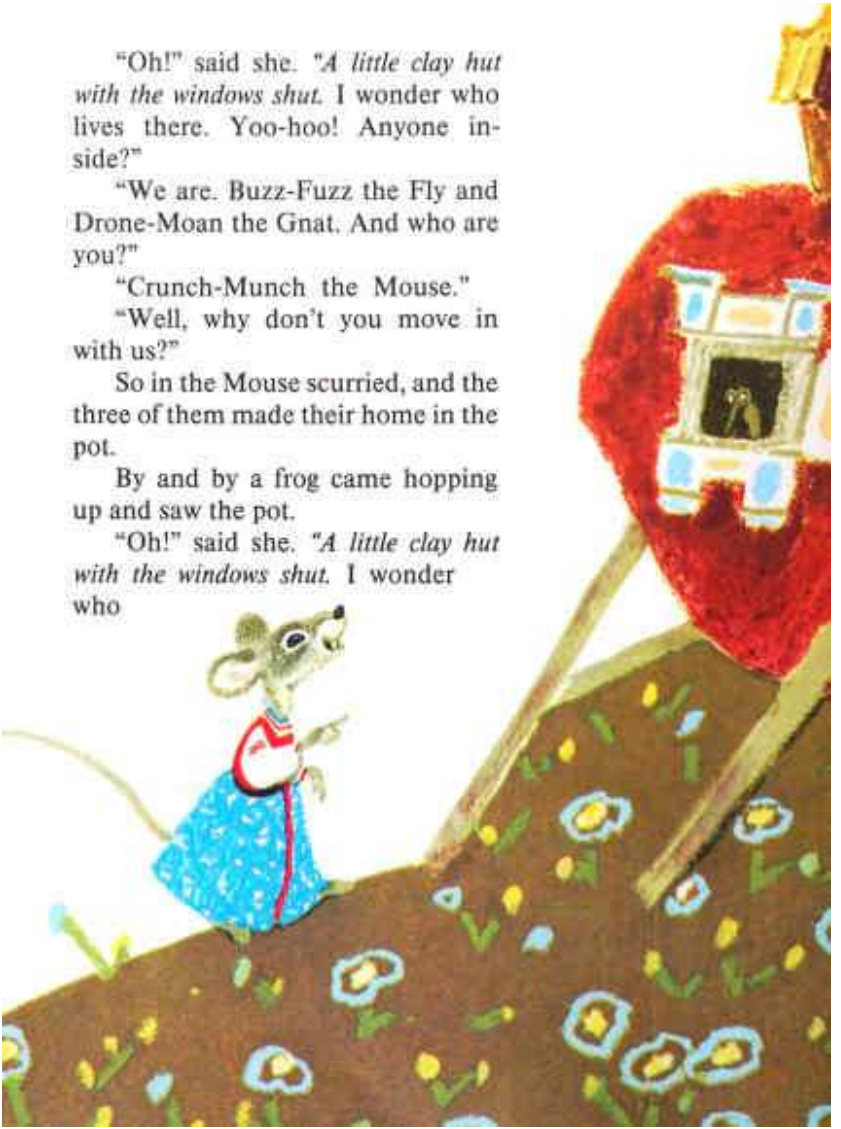
"Crunch-Munch the Mouse."

"Well, why don't you move in with us?"

So in the Mouse scurried, and the three of them made their home in the pot.

By and by a frog came hopping up and saw the pot.

"Oh!" said she. *"A little clay hut with the windows shut.* I wonder who



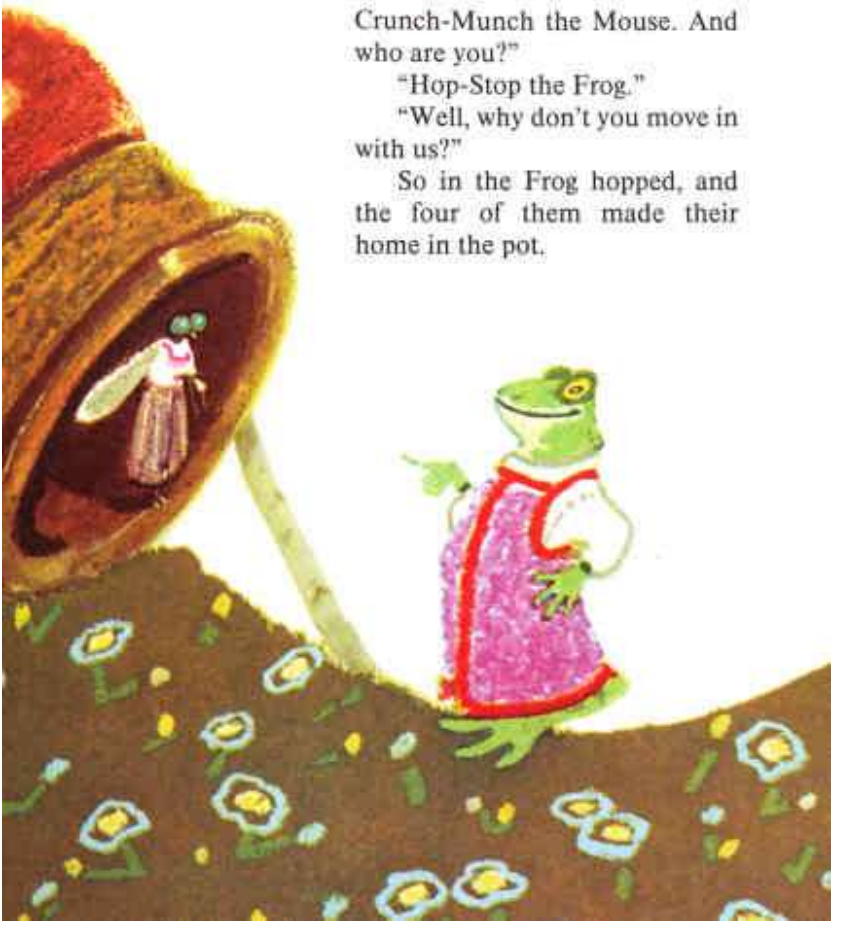
lives there. Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?"

"We are. Buzz-Fuzz the Fly, Drone-Moan the Gnat and Crunch-Munch the Mouse. And who are you?"

"Hop-Stop the Frog."

"Well, why don't you move in with us?"

So in the Frog hopped, and the four of them made their home in the pot.



By and by a rabbit came scuttling up and saw the pot.

"Oh!" said he. "*A little clay hut with the windows shut.* I wonder who lives there. Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?"

"We are. Buzz-Fuzz the Fly, Drone-Moan the Gnat, Crunch-Munch the Mouse and Hop-Stop the Frog. And who are you?"

"Fleet-Feet the Rabbit. You know me! *From mound to mound I go with a bound.*"

"Well, why don't you move in with us?"

So in the Rabbit jumped, and the five of them made their home in the pot.

By and by a fox came running up and saw the hut.

"Oh!" said she. *"A little clay hut with the windows shut.* I wonder who lives there. Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?"

"We are. Buzz-Fuzz the Fly, Drone-Moan the Gnat, Crunch-Munch the Mouse, Hop-Stop the Frog and Fleet-Feet the Rabbit. And who are you?"

"Fluffy-Huffy the Fox. You know me! *My voice is sweet–I don't bark or bleat.*"

"Well, why don't you move in with us?"

So in the Fox crept, and the six of them made their home in the pot.

By and by a wolf came running up and saw the hut.

"Oh!" said he. *"A little clay hut with the windows shut.* I wonder who lives there. Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?"

"We are. Buzz-Fuzz the Fly, Drone-Moan the Gnat, Crunch-Munch the Mouse, Hop-Stop the Frog, Fleet-Feet the Rabbit and Fluffy-Huffy the Fox. And who are you?"

"Howly-Prowly the Wolf. You know me! *I don't stop to play—I pounce on my prey.*"

"Well, why don't you move in with us?" So in the Wolf stole, and the seven of them made their home in the pot and lived there together with never a care in the world.

One day a bear came running up and saw the pot. He stopped and knocked at the door.

"Yoo-hoo! Anyone inside?" he called.

"We are. Buzz-Fuzz the Fly, Drone-Moan the Gnat, Crunch-Munch the Mouse, Hop-Stop the Frog, Fleet-Feet the Rabbit, Fluffy-Huffy the Fox and Howly-Prowly the Wolf. And who are you?"

"Grumbly-Rumbly the Bear. You know me! *If I hold you fast, you will breathe your last.*"

And with that down the Bear sat on the pot. The pot was smashed to bits, and so frightened were the seven friends inside it that away they ran helter-skelter.

The Wolf and the Little White Kids

Once upon a time there lived a goat and her kids. Off the goat would go to the woods to eat of the silken grass and to drink of the cool, sweet water, and the kids would lock the door of the hut behind her and never so much as show their noses outside.

When she came back, the mother goat would knock at the door and sing out:

My kiddies own, my children dear,
Open the door, for your mother is here!
She has brought you some milk which is rich and sweet,
It runs from her udder down to her feet;
From her udder it runs without a sound
And trickles softly over the ground.

The kids would open the door and let in their mother, the mother would feed them and go off to the woods again,

and they would lock the door behind her, just as they had before.

Now the wolf heard the mother goat call to her kids, and one day, when she had gone off to the woods, he ran to the hut and cried in his gruff voice:

My kiddies own,
My children dear,
Open the door
And never you fear.
Your mother has come,
She had brought you some milk,
It runs from her udder
Like a ribbon of silk!

And the kids called back:

"We hear you, whoever you are, but that isn't our mother's voice! Mother's voice is thin and sweet and the words she says are different."

What was the wolf to do?

He went to a smithy and asked the blacksmith to forge him a new throat and make his voice thin and sweet. The blacksmith forged him a new throat, and the wolf ran to the goat's hut and hid behind a bush.

By and by the mother goat came home from the woods. She knocked at the door and called to her kids:

My kiddies own, my children dear,
Open the door, for your mother is here!
She has brought you some milk which is rich and sweet,
It runs from her udder down to her feet;

From her udder it runs without a sound
And trickles softly over the ground.

The kids opened the door for their mother and began telling her about the wolf and how he had wanted to eat them up.

The mother goat fed the kids and then she said very sternly indeed:

"Remember, children, if anyone comes and talks to you, listen carefully, and if his voice is not as thin as mine and he does not say the very same words that I do, do not let him in."

No sooner had the mother goat left than

the wolf came running up. He knocked at the door of the hut and called out in the thinnest of voices:

My kiddies own, my children dear,
Open the door, for your mother is here!
She has brought you some milk which is rich and sweet,

It runs from her udder down to her feet:
From her udder it runs without a sound
And trickles softly over the ground.

The kids opened the door, and the wolf rushed in and gobbled them all up, save for one little kid who had hidden himself in the stove.

By and by the mother goat came home, but call and shout as she would, no one answered her. So, seeing that the door was unlocked, she ran inside. The hut was empty, but she glanced into the stove and found one little kid there.

Great was the mother goat's grief when she learned

what has happened to her other children. Down she dropped on the bench and began weeping and sobbing bitterly, saying over and over again:

O my children dear, o my kiddies own,
Why did I ever leave you alone?
For the wicked wolf you opened the door,
Never, I fear, will I see you more!

The wolf heard her. He came into the hut and said:

"Why do you make me out to be such a villain, Mistress Goat? It was not I who ate your

kids. Do not grieve, but come for a walk in the woods with me instead."

They went to the woods and soon came upon a hole with a fire burning in it.

Said the mother goat to the wolf:

"Come, wolf, let us see if we can jump over the hole."

And she jumped and went straight across. The wolf jumped after her but he tripped and fell into the fire. His belly burst open from the heat, and out the kids hopped, safe and sound, and ran straight to their mother! And they all lived happily ever after.

The Fox and the Thrush

A thrush once built her nest in a tree, laid her eggs and hatched out her thrushlets. When the fox heard of this she came to the tree and sat there tapping her tail against the tree-trunk. The thrush looked out of the nest to see what was the matter.

"I'll cut down the tree with my tail," said the fox, "and then I'll eat you and your babies!"

The thrush was frightened of the fox and began to beg and beseech her.

"Don't cut down my tree, Mother Fox," she wailed, "spare my children and I'll feed you on honey and cake."

"If you feed me on honey and cake I won't cut down the tree!"

"So come out on the highroad with me," said the thrush.

The fox and the thrush set out for the highroad, the thrush flying and the fox running along behind.

The thrush saw an old lady coming down the road with her granddaughter and they were carrying a basket of cakes and a jar of honey.

The fox hid in the bushes and the thrush ran along the road pretending that she could not fly; she would rise a little way off the earth, drop down again, fly up once and then again drop back to earth.

"Let's catch that bird," said the girl.

"How can we catch it?"

"We'll catch it I'm sure. Its wing is broken and it's such a pretty bird."

The old lady and the girl put the basket of cakes and the honey down on the ground and ran after the thrush.

The thrush lured them away from the cakes and honey. The fox did not waste any time but ate as much of the cakes and honey as she could, and hid the rest.

The thrush flew back to her tree, and hardly had she reached her nest when the fox again began tapping the tree-trunk with her tail.

"I'll cut down the tree with my tail and then I'll eat you and your babies!"

"Don't cut down the tree, Mother Fox, spare my children and I'll give you beer to drink."

"Look sharp about it, then. After so many fat pies and so much sweet honey I'm terribly thirsty!"

The thrush flew away again and the fox ran after her down the road.

The thrush saw a countryman with a barrel of beer in his cart. She flew round and round him, then settled first on the horse, then on the barrel and then back, on the horse; the

thrush annoyed the countryman so much he wanted to kill her. At last the thrush alighted on the bung of the barrel, the countryman hit at her with an axe and knocked the bung right into the bunghole. The thrush flew away and the countryman ran after her.

The beer ran out into the road and the fox drank as much as she could and then went her way singing a song.

When the thrush got back to her nest, there was the fox tapping her tail against the trunk.

"Mother Thrush, have you fed me?"

"Yes, I have."

"Did you give me beer to drink?"

"Yes, I did."

"Now make me laugh or I'll cut down the tree with my tail and eat you and your babies!"

The thrush led the fox to the village and there they saw an old woman milking a cow and an old man sitting beside her plaiting a shoe from straw.

The thrush sat on the old woman's shoulder.

"Don't move," said the old man, "there's a thrush on your shoulder, I'll kill it." And he hit the old woman on the shoulder but missed the thrush.

The old woman fell down and knocked over her milk pail. Then she jumped up and began cursing the old man.

The fox laughed at the stupid old man for a long time.

The thrush flew back to her nest, but before she had time to feed her babies, the fox was there again, tapping the trunk with her tail.

"Mother Thrush, have you fed me?"

"Yes, I have."

"Did you give me beer to drink?"

"Yes, I did."

"Did you make me laugh?"

"Yes, I did."

"Now frighten me!"

By this time the thrush was very angry.

"All right, close your eyes and follow me!"

The thrush flew along calling out all the time and the fox ran behind her with her eyes tightly closed. The thrush led the fox straight to some hunters with a pack of hounds.

"Now you can be frightened, Mother Fox!"

The fox opened her eyes and saw the hounds. Away she went very fast, the dogs after her. She hid in her hole and sat there trying to regain her breath and saying to herself:

"What were you doing, eyes?" she asked.

"We watched to make sure the hounds didn't eat you."

"What were you doing, ears?"

"We listened to make sure the hounds didn't swallow you."

"What were you doing, legs?"

"We ran to make sure the hounds didn't catch you."

"What were you doing, tail?"

"I caught hold of bushes and stumps and branches so that you could not run too fast."

And the fox was angry with her tail and stuck it out of her hole.

"Come and eat my tail, hounds!"

The hounds caught the fox by the tail and pulled her out of the hole.

The Muzhik and the Bear

A muzhik went to the woods to plant turnips. While he was ploughing, up came a Bear and said:

"Muzhik, I'm going to break your bones."

"Please, Bruin, don't break my bones. Help me plant turnips instead. I will take the roots for myself and you can have the tops."

"Very well," said the Bear. "But if you cheat me, don't ever let me catch sight of you again!"

So saying, he went off into the greenwood.

The turnips grew big. In the autumn the Muzhik went to

dig them out. And the Bear came out of the greenwood and said:

"Come, Muzhik, let us share the turnips."

"Very well, Bruin. The tops are yours, the roots are mine."

And the Muzhik gave the Bear all the leaves. The turnips themselves he piled into his cart and rode off to town to sell them.

On the way he met the Bear.

"Where are you going?" asked the Bear.

"I am going to town, Bruin, to sell the roots."

"Let me see what your roots taste like."

The Muzhik gave him a turnip. As soon as the Bear had tasted it he roared: "Aha! You have cheated me! Your roots are much sweeter than my leaves. Don't dare come to my forest for firewood any more or I'll break your bones."

The next year the Muzhik planted rye in the same place. When he came to reap, there was the Bear waiting for him.

"You won't cheat me this time, my man," said the Bear. "Give me my share!"

And the Muzhik said:

"So be it. You shall have the roots this time, Bruin, and I shall have to be content with the tops."

They gathered in the rye. The Muzhik gave the Bear all the roots, loaded the grain in his cart and carried it home. The Bear chewed away at the roots and it was just like eating wood.

This made him very angry with the Muzhik, and ever since then the Bear and the Muzhik have been enemies.

The Fox and the Crane

A fox and a crane became friends. The fox wanted to give her friend the crane a treat and invited him to dinner.

"Come and have dinner with me, Brother Crane, I'll give you an excellent meal!"

The crane accepted the invitation and the fox made some porridge and spread it on plates.

"Eat it all up, Brother Crane," said the fox, "it's very good, I made it myself."

The crane pecked and pecked at the plate with his long beak; he pecked and pecked but could not get anything off the plate.

Meanwhile the fox was licking her plate with her tongue; she licked and licked until the plate was quite clean. She ate up all the porridge herself.

"Don't be angry with me, Brother Crane, but that's all I have in the house. There's nothing else to eat."

"Thank you for that, Sister Fox," answered the crane. "Now you must come and have dinner with me one day."

The fox went to the crane for dinner. The crane had made some soup and put it in tall jars with narrow necks. He put the jars on the table and said:

"Eat it all up, Sister Fox. It's all I have in the house."

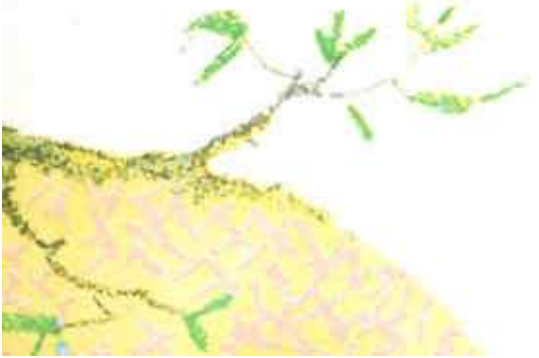
The fox walked round and round her jar. She tried this way and that, she licked it, she sniffed it, but not a drop of that soup could she get, for her head was too big to go into the neck of the jar.

But the crane had his long beak in the jar and pecked and pecked until he had eaten all the soup.

"Don't be angry with me, Sister Fox, but that's really all I have in the house."

But the fox *was* angry. She had thought she would eat enough to last her a week, but she went home as hungry as she had come. The crane had given her tit for tat.

Since then there has been no friendship between the fox and the crane.



Rabbit Talk Big

Once there was a rabbit who lived in the forest. He was well enough off in summer, but not so in winter when he had to steal oats from the peasants to keep body and soul together.

One day he came to a farm, and there on the threshing-floor was a whole flock of rabbits. So what did he do but begin bragging and boasting for all he was worth.

"No one has whiskers as long as mine!" said he. "Or paws as big or teeth as sharp. I'm not afraid of anyone!"

The rabbits were disgusted, and they told Old Auntie Crow about Rabbit Talk Big.

Off went Old Auntie Crow to look for Rabbit Talk Big, and she found him crouching under a bush.

Seeing her, Rabbit Talk Big sat up in fright.

"I won't brag any more, Old Auntie Crow, honest I won't!" said he.

"What did you brag about?"

"Well, I said that no one had whiskers as long as mine or paws as big or teeth as sharp."

Old Auntie Crow caught Rabbit Talk Big by the ear, and she pecked at and shook him.

"Don't you ever brag any more!" said she.

One day Old Auntie Crow was sitting on a fence when some dogs ran up to it. They seized Old Auntie Crow, dragged her down and began to worry and tease her.

Rabbit Talk Big saw them and he felt very sorry for Old Auntie Crow.

"Poor Old Auntie Crow!" said he. "I'm going to try and help her." And up he leapt on to a hummock.

Seeing Rabbit Talk Big, the dogs let go of Old Auntie Crow, who flew up on to the fence again and went after him. But Rabbit Talk Big ran very fast and they never caught him.

After a time Old Auntie Crow came across Rabbit Talk Big again.

"You're not a braggart at all, Rabbit Talk Big," she said. *"You're a rabbit brave and true, and I owe my life to you!"*

The Bear and the Fox

Once upon a time there were a fox and a bear. The bear had a barrel of honey in the loft that he had put away for the winter.

Now the fox heard about that honey and wondered how she could get some of it. She went to the bear's house and stood under the window.

"Brother Bear, can you help me in my trouble?"

"What's you trouble, Sister Fox?"

"My house is old, it's falling to pieces and I have no fire. Please let me stay in your house for the night."

"Come along in, then," said the kindly bear.

They lay down to sleep beside the fire, but the cunning fox was thinking all the time about the honey. She kept wagging her tail, and the bear was soon awakened by the fox's tail going tap-tap-tap on the floor.

"Who's that knocking, Sister Fox?"

"Somebody has come for me. There's a baby been born."

"Then you'd better go."

The fox went out, not to see the new baby, but up into the loft by the outside ladder to eat some honey. When she had had enough, back she went and lay down again beside the fire.

"Sister Fox," asked the bear, "what did they call the baby?"

"Starter."

"A nice name."

The next night they lay down to sleep and again the fox's tail went tap-tap-tap on the floor.

"Brother Bear, again they're calling me to see a new baby."

"Then you'd better go, Sister Fox."

This time the fox ate the honey half way down the barrel, and when she got back into the house, the bear wanted to know what they had called the baby.

"Half-way."

"A nice name."

And the third night, too, the fox went tap-tap-tap with her tail.

"Another baby for me to see to," she said.

"All right," said the bear, "but you hurry back, I'm going to make pancakes for breakfast."

"I won't be long."

The fox ran straight up to the loft and finished the honey, she even scraped the bottom of the barrel.

When she got back the bear was already up.

"Well, Sister Fox, what did they call the baby this time?"

"Scraper."

"That's the best name yet. Now lets make the pancakes." The bear was busy frying pancakes when the fox asked him:

"Where's the honey for these pancakes?"

"In the loft."

The bear climbed up into the loft and found the empty barrel.

"Who ate the honey? It was you, Sister Fox, no one else could have eaten it."

"Why, I never even saw your honey," said the fox, "you ate it yourself and now you're blaming me!"

The poor bear thought and thought ...

"I know what we'll do to find out who ate it," he said at last, "we'll lie down on our backs in the sun, and if either of us has been eating honey, the sun will melt it and it will come out through the skin."

And so they lay down in the sun. The bear soon fell asleep, but the cunning fox was afraid to sleep. She watched and watched until she saw spots of honey oozing through the skin of her belly. She quickly brushed them off and rubbed them on the bear's belly.

"Hi, Brother Bear, wake up! Look who's been eating honey!"

And there was nothing the poor bear could do about it!

The Goat, the Ram and the Cat

There were once a Goat and a Ram who lived in the same farmyard. The Goat and the Ram were good friends and always shared everything, were it only a wisp of hay.

Now, one day the Ram and the Goat lay stretched out on the ground, talking, when, as if out of thin air, a Cat, Miaow-and-Purr-Coat-of-Grey-Fur appeared. Up he came towards them, and the tears streamed from his eyes.

"Why are you crying, Miaow-and-Purr?" asked the Goat and the Ram. "And limping, too?"

"How can I help it! *The mistress beat me and pulled my ears and said she would drown me in my tears.*"

"What did you do that she should say such a thing?"

"Lapped up the sour cream, that's what!"

And Miaow-and-Purr burst out crying again.

"What are you crying for now?" asked his friends.

"How can I help it! As the mistress went at me she said: 'We're having our son-in-law to dinner, and now there's no sour cream to give him. There is nothing for it but to kill the Goat and the Ram and serve them up instead!'"

The Goat and the Ram flew into a rage.

"You bad Miaow-and-Purr-Coat-of-Grey-Fur!" cried they. "Why should you have got us into trouble! We'll gore you to death for it, that's what we'll do!"

But as Miaow-and-Purr-Coat-of-Grey-Fur said he was

very sorry indeed and begged their pardon, the Goat and the Ram forgave him. The three of them sat down together and began to think what they should do.

"Show us how strong your head is, Brother Ram," Miaow-and-Purr said to him. "See if you can break the gate open with it." The Ram got to his feet, he rushed at the gate and he knocked against it with his head, but the gate only creaked and did not open.

"Come, Brother Goat, show us how strong *your* head is," said Miaow-and-Purr, turning to the Goat.

The Goat got to his feet, rushed at the gate, knocked against it, and lo!–the gate swung open.

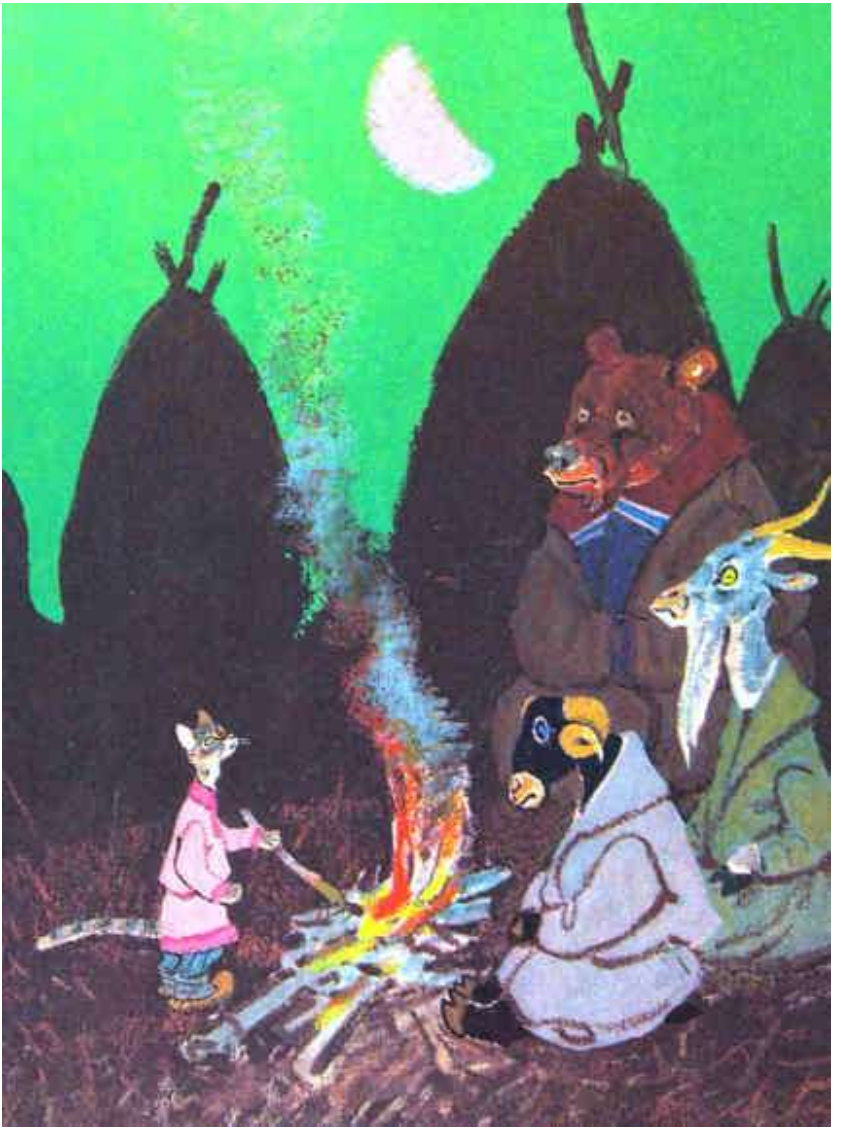
Away ran the Ram and the Goat, with Miaow-and-Purr limping behind them on his three good legs, and so fast did they go that *the grass was bent to the very ground and great clouds of dust rose all around.*

"I can't keep up with you two," said he to the Goat and the Ram. "Do take pity on me."

The Goat picked up Miaow-and-Purr and put him on his back, and off the three of them ran again–*across woods and fields and deserts dry, over hills and dales and mountains high.*

Day and night they ran and never stopped, and *they came to a hill which was green as green with just below it a deep ravine*, and there was a field there with a hundred stacks of hay, each as large as a whole town, in it. The Ram, the Goat and the Cat stopped there for a rest, but it was autumn, the night was cold, and how they were to start a fire they did not know!

The Goat and the Ram began to think what to do, but before they could think of anything there was Miaow-and-



Purr with a piece of birch bark in his paws. He wrapped this round the Goat's horns and told him and the Ram to knock their heads together.

This they did, and so hard that the sparks flew from their eyes, and the bark kindled and blazed up. They made up a fire and sat round it warming themselves.

They were just beginning to thaw out when, lo and behold!–a Bear came striding towards them.

"Do let me rest and get warm by your fire," he begged, "I'm very, very tired."

"Go right ahead. But tell us where you were and what you were doing."

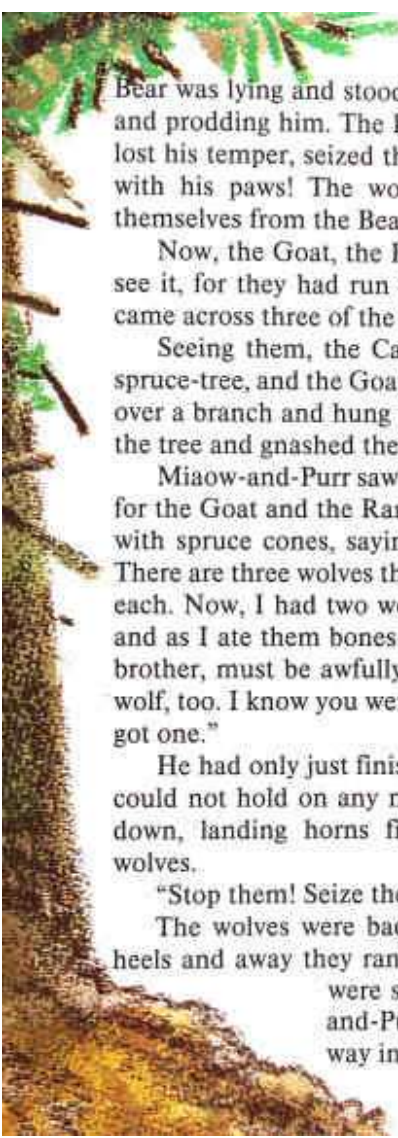
"I was in a bee-garden and I had a fight with the bee-keepers," the Bear said.

Now, it was getting dark by then, for night had come, so the four of them lay down for a sleep, the Bear under a haystack, the Cat on top of it, and the Goat and the Ram by the fire. All of a sudden who should come running up to them but seven grey wolves and one white one, and they made straight for the haystack!

The Goat and the Ram began bleating in fear, but Miaow-and-Purr-Coat-of-Grey-Fur said:

"Listen to me, White Wolf, Prince of the Wolves! Take care lest you anger our elder brother the Goat. He has a terrible temper and, once roused, will spare no one. His strength is in his beard, with its help he gets the better of all animals, and he skins them alive with his horns. You had better come up to him quietly and say that you want to measure your strength with that of our younger brother. See him? He's lying under the haystack."

The wolves nodded their heads. They went to where the



Bear was lying and stood over him, and they began teasing and prodding him. The Bear bore it for a time, but then he lost his temper, seized the wolves and squeezed them hard with his paws! The wolves were frightened. They freed themselves from the Bear's grasp and took to their heels.

Now, the Goat, the Ram and the Cat were not there to see it, for they had run away to the forest. But there they came across three of the selfsame wolves again.

Seeing them, the Cat climbed quickly to the top of a spruce-tree, and the Goat and the Ram flung their front legs over a branch and hung there. And the wolves stood under the tree and gnashed their teeth.

Miaow-and-Purr saw that things looked bad for him and for the Goat and the Ram and began showering the wolves with spruce cones, saying as he did so: "One, two, three. There are three wolves there. That means we only get a wolf each. Now, I had two wolves for my dinner the other day, and as I ate them bones and all, I'm still full. But you, my brother, must be awfully hungry, so I'll let you eat up my wolf, too. I know you were out hunting for a bear and never got one."

He had only just finished speaking when the Goat, who could not hold on any more, let go of the branch and fell down, landing horns first, right on top of one of the wolves.

"Stop them! Seize them!" Miaow-and-Purr cried.

The wolves were badly frightened. They took to their heels and away they ran without once looking back. They were soon gone from sight, and Miaow-and-Purr and his two friends went their way in peace.

Little Girl and the Swan-Geese

Once there was a peasant and his wife and they had a little girl and a little boy.

"Daughter," said the Mother to her Little Girl, "we are going out to work, so look after your Little Brother. If you are a good girl and do not go out of doors, we shall buy you a new kerchief."

Father and Mother went away, but Little Girl forgot what she had been told. She seated Little Brother on the grass by the window and ran away to play with her friends.

Suddenly a flock of Swan-Geese swooped down, caught up Little Brother and carried him off on their wings.

Little Girl came home, but alas!–Little Brother was gone. She gasped, ran here and there–but not a sign of him did she see.

She called him and sobbed, crying that she would catch it from Father and Mother, but Little Brother did not answer.

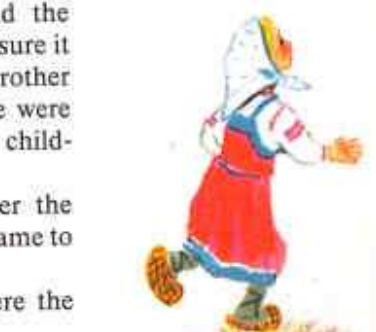
So out she ran into the open field but could see nothing save some Swan-Geese flying far beyond the dark woods. Suddenly she was sure it was they who had carried her brother off: folks said the Swan-Geese were wicked birds who stole little children.

So off ran Little Girl after the birds. She ran and ran till she came to an Oven.

"Oven, Oven, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown?"

"Eat one of my rye loaves and I will tell you," said the Oven.

"What, me eat a rye loaf? At



Father's we do not eat even wheaten loaves!"

So the Oven did not tell her. Little Girl ran on a bit farther and saw an Apple-Tree.

"Apple-Tree, Apple-Tree, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown?"

"Eat one of my wild apples and I will tell you," said the Tree.

"At Father's we do not eat even garden apples!"

So the Apple-Tree did not tell her. Little Girl ran on till she came to Milk River with Fruit-Jelly Banks.

"Milk River with Fruit-Jelly Banks, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown?"

"Have some of my jelly with milk and I will tell you."

"At Father's we do not eat even jelly with cream."

So Milk River did not tell her.

All day long she ran about the fields and woods. When evening came there was nothing for her to do but go home. All at once, what should she see but a hut on chicken feet with one tiny window, turning round and round.

Inside the hut sat Baba-Yaga, the witch, spinning tow. And on the bench sat Little Girl's brother playing with silver apples.

Little Girl went in.

"Good evening, Granny!"

"Good evening, lass. What brings you here?"

"My frock is wet through with dew, so I have come in to dry."

"Sit down then and spin some tow."

Baba-Yaga gave her the spindle and went out. Little Girl was sitting there spinning when all of a sudden a Mouse ran out from under the stove and said to her:

"Lassie, lassie, give me some porridge and I will tell you something."

Little Girl gave her some porridge, and Mouse said:

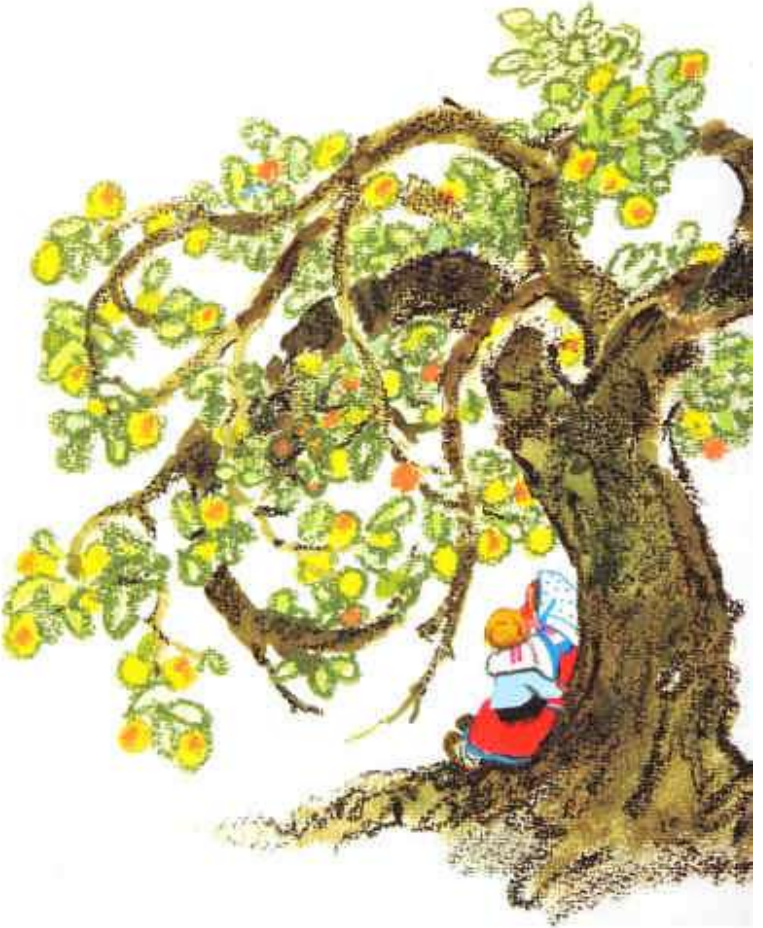
"Baba-Yaga has gone to make a fire in the bath-house. She will steam you and wash you, roast you in the oven and eat you up, and then take a ride on your bones."

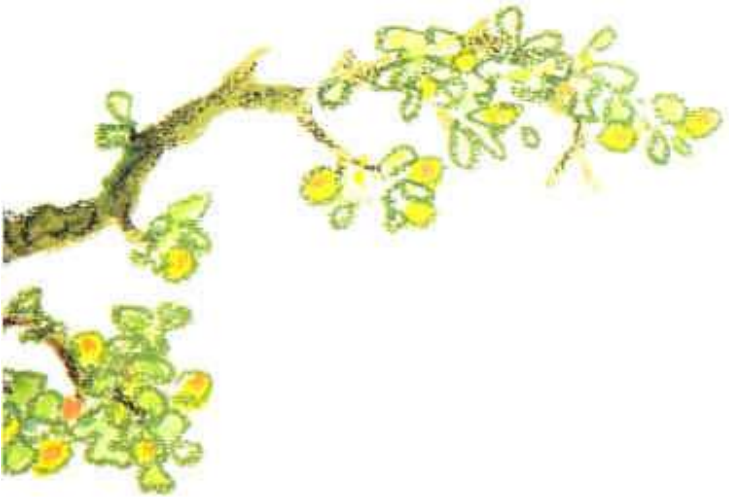
Little Girl began crying and trembling with fear, but Mouse went on:

"Make haste, take Little Brother and run away, and I will spin the tow for you."

So Little Girl took Little Brother in her arms and ran off. Baba-Yaga came up to the window every once in a while and said:

"Are you spinning, lass?"





And Mouse would answer, "Yes, I am, Granny."

Baba-Yaga made a fire in the bath-house and came for Little Girl. But the hut was empty. Baba-Yaga cried: "Fly away, Swan-Geese, fly and catch them! Little Girl has carried off Little Brother!"

Little Girl ran until she came to Milk River, and what should she see there but the Swan-Geese coming after her and her brother.

"Milk River, Milk River, hide me, do!" cried Little Girl.

"Eat some of my plain fruit jelly."

Little Girl ate some and said thank you. So Milk River

hid her and her brother in the shadow of its Fruit-Jelly Banks.

And the Swan-Geese flew past without seeing them.

Little Girl ran on again. But the Swan-Geese turned back and flew straight towards her. At any moment they would see her. What was she to do? She ran up to the Apple-Tree.

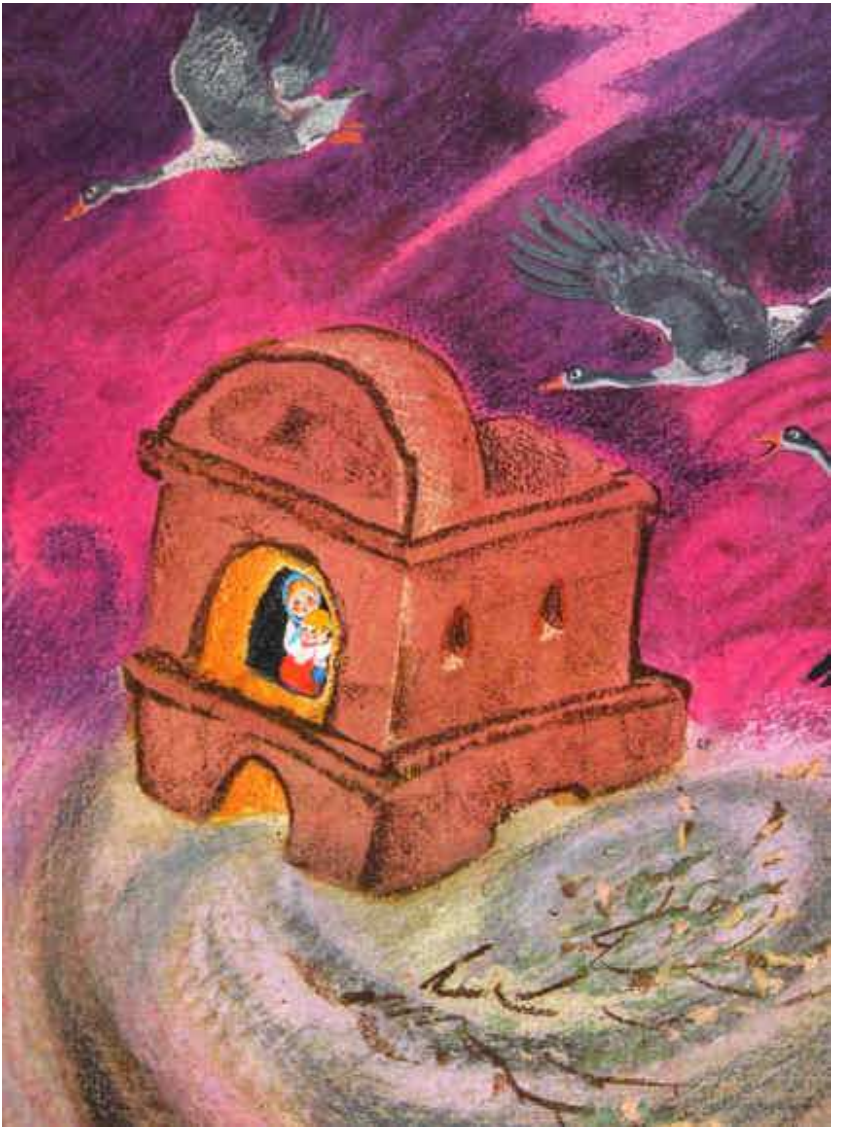
"Apple-Tree, Apple-Tree, hide me, do!"

"Eat my wild apples."

Little Girl ate one quickly and said thank you. The Apple-Tree hid her among its leaves and branches.

The Swan-Geese flew past without seeing her.

Little Girl picked up her brother and ran on again. When she had almost reached home the Swan-Geese



caught sight of her. They honked and flapped their wings, and in another minute would have torn Little Brother out of her arms.

Little Girl came running up to the Oven.

"Oven, Oven, hide me, do!"

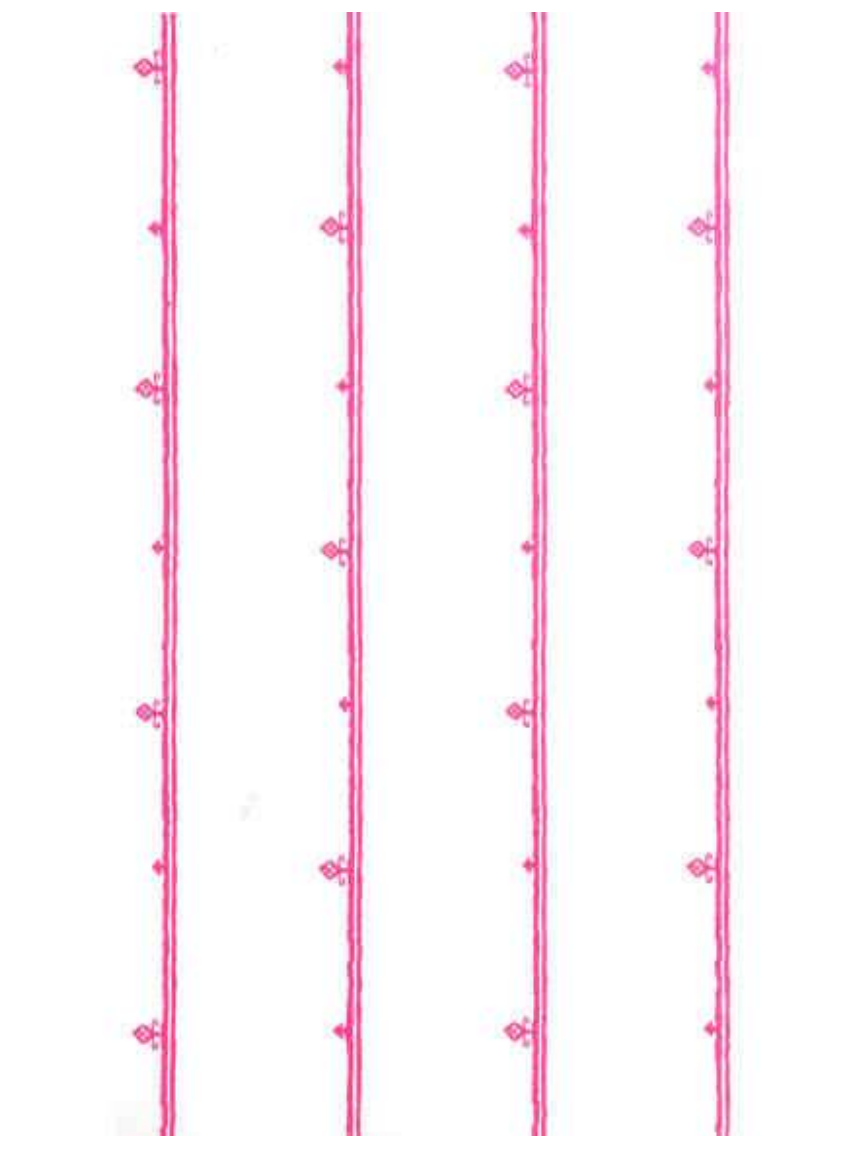
"Eat one of my rye loaves."

Little Girl popped a piece of a loaf into her mouth and crawled into the Oven with her brother.

The Swan-Geese flew round and round screaming and honking, but after a while they gave up the chase and flew back to Baba-Yaga.

Little Girl said thank you to the Oven and ran home with her brother.

And before long Father and Mother came home.



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